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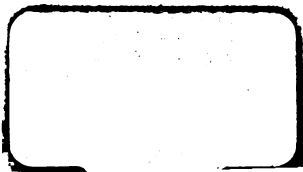
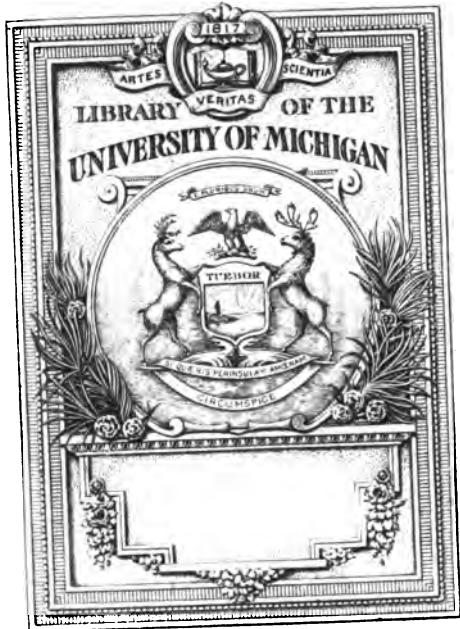
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EULOGY

ON THE LATE

GENERAL PHILIP H. SHERIDAN

BY GEN. R. A. ALGER.

DELIVERED AT THE
REUNION OF THE ARMY OF THE CUMBERLAND,
CHICAGO, SEPTEMBER 19, 1888.

DETROIT:
JOHN F. EBY & CO., BOOK AND JOB PRINTERS.
1888.



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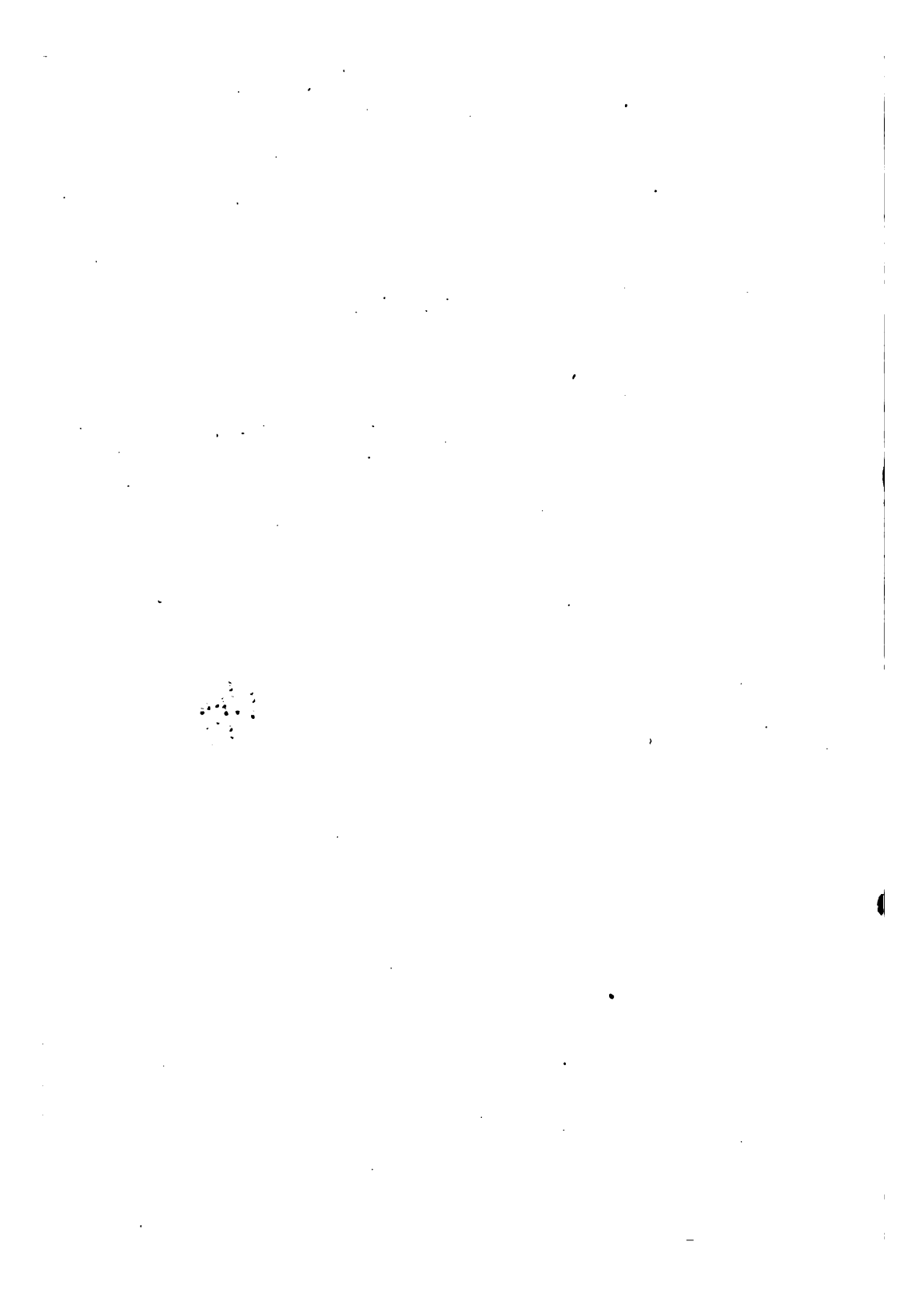
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GENERAL SHERIDAN.

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PHILIP HENRY SHERIDAN was born March 6, 1831, in the midst of poverty. His early life was a continual battle, but as the strongest metals with the firmest fiber are made so by fire and hammer, so the character of Sheridan was strengthened by adversity.

We find him in 1848 a cadet at West Point, a hard-working but rather belligerent boy. While not quarrelsome, he would instantly resent even the appearance of an insult, no matter if he knew the "shutter" would have to be brought into use to take him to his quarters, as a consequence. Thus it came that he was set back a year in his course, and many demerits had to be canceled at that, as he frequently said himself, to enable him to graduate at all.

He graduated No. 34 in a class of fifty-two. Served a lieutenant of infantry in the wilds of Oregon and Washington Territories from 1855 to 1861.

We find him once complimented in General Orders for gallantry in battle against the Indians.

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-ONE!—Who then living will ever forget that eventful year? From the South had come mutterings and threats. Still the

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North did not for a moment believe it would precipitate actual war. It came, however, and came as only civil war can come;—a war between people of the same blood, and of a common heritage. It came freighted with every suffering known to war! It came to be fought to the bitter end.

Unlike the wars of Europe, which would have ended at farthest with Gettysburg and Vicksburg, these reverses to the South seemed only to increase its fury, which was met as promptly and with equal courage and determination by the loyal North.

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-ONE had passed with its varied successes and failures for the Union army. In Virginia we had met with disasters, while in the West, though not always successful, we had won Donelson and Shiloh. Still rebellion was running at an increasing tide, and the spring of 1862 found both armies facing each other, and both being rapidly strengthened by enlistments, while our navy was being augmented as rapidly as possible.

The call for men for the ranks was being nobly responded to by the loyal North, but the great cry was for men to command them.

General Grant had shown great capabilities, but even he, unjustly we all believe, was under a temporary shadow, while Sherman was but a Division Commander. There was never a time when fighting and skilled officers were more needed.

Men without experience were commissioned of necessity, and sent to the front to command companies, regiments, and brigades, while Sheridan, an educated soldier, and then 30 years of age, was on staff duty—a *quartermaster*.

Thus it was, in May of that year, that our hero first appeared upon the scene, destined to become one of our most brilliant stars, and yet heretofore undiscovered!

His official record, I think correct, is as follows: He entered West Point in 1848, graduated July 1, 1853, and was assigned to the First Infantry as Brevet-second Lieutenant, serving with his regiment in Texas; Second Lieutenant Fourth Infantry, November 22, 1854; First Lieutenant Fourth Infantry, March 1, 1861; Captain Thirteenth Infantry, May 14, 1861, and in the autumn of that year was ordered from the Pacific coast, where he had been serving, to join his regiment at Jefferson Barracks, near St. Louis, Mo., and assigned to duty as Chief Quartermaster.

About the middle of April, 1862, he reported to General Halleck, at Pittsburg Landing, where he served as staff quartermaster at the General's headquarters.

He has said himself, frequently, that General Halleck expressed regrets at his leaving, and among the reasons for so doing, was, that no one could pitch headquarters' tents as well as he, which shows that

whatever he did, he did well. May 25, 1862, he was appointed colonel of the Second Michigan Cavalry, by Governor Blair, of that State. He assumed command of his regiment the same evening, and on the following day started with it and the Second Iowa Cavalry, under command of Colonel W. L. Elliott, of the latter regiment, upon the first raid of the war, passing in rear of Beauregard's army at Corinth and striking Booneville, a station about twenty miles south of the latter place; destroying large amounts of ammunition, supplies, cars, engines, and a number of bridges.

July 1, 1862, he was promoted to brigadier general of volunteers for the cavalry fight with Chalmers of that date, where he met the latter with two regiments against eight, Sheridan's command numbering less than 800 men. This battle was fought, as you will note, at the same place raided in May, before mentioned.

He received the appointment of major general of volunteers to date December 31, 1862, for the battle of Stone River.

Appointed Brigadier General in the regular army September 20, 1864, for the battle of Winchester; Major General in regular army November 8, 1864, for the battle of Cedar Creek.

Lieutenant General U. S. A., March 4, 1869.

General U. S. A., June 1, 1888.

Let me sketch Sheridan to you as he appeared stand-

ing in front of his tent on that eventful May morning when the letter, written upon a half sheet of note paper, appointing him Colonel of the Second Michigan Cavalry, sent by Michigan's famous war governor, Austin Blair, was handed to him. In stature about 5 feet 5 inches; weight 135 pounds, a large head, piercing eye, broad shoulders and tapering to his feet much like an iron wedge, and as his command afterwards learned—about as firm! As was always his custom, his uniform coat was buttoned to the chin, and he looked every inch a soldier—as he was. When he received his appointment, his surprise and delight seemed about equal. Soon he was surrounded by his brother staff officers, who were profuse in their congratulations. When one of them proposed his health, with the hope that his colonel's commission would be "only a step to a brigadier's star," Sheridan replied instantly: "No, thank you; I am now a colonel of cavalry and have all the rank I wish." His supposed zenith was but his horizon!

Thus we see how little men know even themselves! The fondest ambition gratified—gratifies not at all! The things we think will fully satisfy us, once gained, are found to lack the pleasure we anticipated! We are constantly looking beyond, eager for the morrow that never comes, and too apt to forget the blessings of to-day.

Perhaps it is well it is thus, else man would be con-

tent with this life, giving little thought to the life beyond!

As before stated, the evening of the day Colonel Sheridan received his appointment he appeared in camp and assumed command of his regiment. He wore his captain's uniform coat with one row of buttons, and a pair of infantry colonel's shoulder straps; the latter probably all he could procure after his appointment.

He was a resolute man, and his command soon learned the fact that unless in camp *two* parties were in *constant danger*—the *enemy* and *themselves!*

He was always genial and easily approached except in battle, when his whole nature seemed to change, and woe to the man who crossed him while the fight was on! Speaking of this fact not a year since, when told he was always *ugly* in battle, he replied, "I guess that was so; it was the way I always felt."

I have given you this early sketch of the General that you may see how he appeared when he started on his famous career.

Thanks to the genius of our institutions, we have no hereditary titles, and high birth adds in the race of life, neither advantage nor the converse. Upon the *acts* of the individual rest his success or failure. True, surroundings and opportunities aid in paving the way, but no substantial success follows accidents.

I well remember the remarks of a brusque old gen-


tleman many years ago when it was said of a person that he was "lucky."

"Lucky?" said he, "don't talk to me about luck; give me the man."

It can be easily imagined how restive such a man as Sheridan would be, tied to staff duty during a year and more of war. However, when once released he commenced his work in an earnest and most systematic manner.

As colonel of his regiment he at once employed a scout or guide familiar with the country, keeping him at his own expense; and no road, by-path, stream, bridge, swamp, or hill existed, if within ten miles of his headquarters, but it appeared on his map. And right there lay one of the strong elements that contributed to his success. No matter how great the extent of the country over which he was to operate, he had the rare faculty of possessing a full knowledge of it. So also concerning the position and strength of the enemy. He would locate its corps, divisions, brigades and outposts, giving very nearly the strength of each, as well as the strength of the positions they occupied.

In battle, when he struck the enemy he followed every advantage with such impetuosity as to leave him no time to recover from the effects of one blow before receiving another, nor was he ever permitted to face about before being driven from the field. He



seemed always to know where to send in his troops to accomplish the most. He aimed to break through and divide the enemy, but never divided his own command beyond supporting distance.

Such was the combination—knowledge of the topography of the country—position and strength of the enemy—quick perception and decision—heavy and rapid blows—which gave him the success that crowned him among the foremost generals of modern history.

Sheridan never lost a battle. He seldom made an attack that was not successful, and, like a mighty rock standing in the sea whose waves strike it only to be divided and shattered, so no enemy's host was ever hurled upon his command but to be broken.

Those who saw a handful of men defeat ten times their number at Booneville; those who stood in the cedar brakes at Stone River and witnessed the repulse of the proudest army ever sent by the rebels to the West; those who were with him in the seven miles of fire at Mission Ridge; those who were with him in that hell of fire, the Wilderness; or served under him in the great cavalry fights of Yellow Tavern and Trevillian Station; those who passed with him through the terrible battle of Winchester; those who helped demolish Early's victorious army at Cedar Creek, for which he and his army were thanked by Congress; and those who followed him at Five Forks, where he "hurled our final strength across the path of Lee;"

all joined in the acclaim, as each victory in turn increased his bewildering fame, crowning him with the plaudits of the world!

One of the strong characteristics of General Sheridan was his intense devotion to the cause of the Union. Soldiering with him was not a mere occupation—a road to gratify personal ambition. He believed intensely that rebellion was a crime, and that it ought to be put down, no matter what the cost. He had no patience whatever with the people of the North who either sympathized with the rebellion, or spoke discouragingly about putting it down, or disparagingly of the force that was crushing it.

It was this intense earnestness that made his success. His appearance upon the field at any time during a battle always created the wildest enthusiasm. He handled a regiment as though it was an army, and an army was maneuvered by him as though it was a regiment.

We hear much extraordinary praise of General Sheridan as a cavalry commander; and while he was that, he was more. As General Sherman said in Toledo a few days since, "Sheridan was all his rank implied. He was a *General*; and as capable of commanding an army as any brought out by the war."

In John Russell Young's "Around the World with General Grant," the General, in conversation with Prince Bismarck, is quoted to have said: "I regard Sheridan as not only one of the greatest soldiers of our



war, but one of the greatest soldiers of the world ; as a man who is fit for the highest command. No better general than Sheridan ever lived." This is authentic ; as the General revised the work before publication.

Why, then, should I indulge in panegyric over General Sheridan, when we have this testimony from the highest authority the world can produce.

A truth once stated gains nothing by repetition.

What a life, and what a lesson ! Without friends ; with nothing but his own courage and indomitable will, he commenced at the bottom and climbed the ladder to the top of fame's highest pinnacle, but never kicking the rounds from under him as he ascended, but leaving them there for others to follow. His example is a torch ; a beacon light ; a lesson to every boy and man ; and while great success is given to but few, yet such an example as his is of the most inestimable value, as a guide to every one possessed of a laudable ambition. Sheridan's part of the war was so prominent that it attracted attention at once, and became the theme for poets, artists, and historians to dwell upon. Other men have served their country well, and died hoping that future generations would do them justice. Sheridan was happy in living in the glory of his own fame ; and his fondest friends can hope for no more than that the future may concur with his own time in doing him honor.

People have a longing to look into the hearts of great men. There is often disappointment as well as pleasure about it. The unthoughtful are apt to believe that great men are entirely great. The truth is, they are much like other men in their general characteristics, and only marked by some single superior quality. They are often as unknown to themselves as they are to others. Their future lies concealed from them.

Sheridan was one of those who accepted good fortune as it came, content to fill the place assigned him to his best ability, and with very little of that consuming ambition which peers into the future, and from the cabin at one end of life's journey sees the palace rising at the other!

Nearly a quarter of a century has passed and peace reigns throughout the land, yet the greater number of the men who served with their gallant commander are still among the living. The muster rolls of the Grand Army of the Republic carry about 400,000 names, of which nearly 5,000 have been "mustered out" during the past year. It is estimated that about one-half of the veterans living belong to this organization; and it is but reasonable to suppose that those *without* are falling by the wayside as rapidly as those within. Thus ten thousand of these brave comrades have passed away since last you met, an average of about one for



every time the minute hand passes around the dial of the clock. Their sufferings are ended! Their weary hearts are at rest! They are beyond care and trouble! No poorhouse can ever again open or close its doors to any of them! Let us ever revere their memory.

The men who served their country and saved it—the men who made it what it is to-day—the comrades of our gallant Sheridan—ought to be the Nation's wards and not its paupers. A grateful country should rise up to give them their just reward and place them beyond the possibility of suffering during the few years yet allotted to them.

Among the new-made graves on the banks of the peaceful Potomac, overlooking the Capitol of the Nation, surrounded by the graves of thousands of his comrades who fell by his side, is that containing all that is mortal of this great man and comrade. He died as a hero dies: facing the dread destroyer without a murmur; and as his form was laid away in its last resting place at Arlington, a loyal people gathered around his grave and bathed the new-made mound that covers his lifeless form with their tears.

Great soul! loving father! devoted husband! loyal friend! Your life, your affection for your country, your record as a soldier and as a man are the heritage of a grateful Nation.

A country broken, you helped to rebuild; a divided

sentiment, you helped to make one! On the bow of promise, which, spanning this great land, assures us that "peace, unity, and concord" shall remain forever, are inscribed the names of the men who placed it there; and at its apex shines in letters as bright as the day, that shall never fade, the immortal name—

SHERIDAN!!

